

Lisbon's Press Rough on U.S. Envoy

Ambassador's Denial of CIA Ties Treated With Skepticism

BY DON COOK

Times Staff Writer

LISBON—Ever since American Ambassador Frank Carlucci arrived here three months ago, he has been busy shooting down stories that he really works for the Central Intelligence Agency, and it has been like killing flies with an air rifle.

He has now tried the "flypaper technique," facing a Lisbon press conference arranged at the unusual invitation of the Information Ministry, with about 100 Portuguese and foreign journalists. But however successful he might have been, the CIA complex goes on buzzing in Lisbon and probably never will expire.

The ambassador, at least won plaudits for his fluent Portuguese which was reported to be grammatically almost perfect if somewhat marred for Lisbon perfectionists by a Brazilian accent. As for the press conference itself, the questions were, predictably, along the lines of "have you stopped beating your wife?" (as it happens, Carlucci has no wife). And his replies were greeted, predictably, with "Methinks he doth protest too much."

The Portuguese press these days is Leftist-controlled almost across the board, much of it openly Communist. And about all that Carlucci could really expect when he decided to face the mob was that they would spell his name right and quote him correctly. That was about what his CIA disclaimers got, along with a large dose of skepticism.

The weekly newspaper *Sempre Fixe* carried the story of the press conference under a headline "One Hour to Say No" with a cartoon of Carlucci holding a halo over his own head and a lead to the article which read: "Lured to the press conference by promises of clarification, instead all we got were denials."

The Lisbon daily *Diario de Noticias*, one of the more responsible papers in the country, leaped for its headline



Frank Carlucci

AP Wirephoto

on the circumstances under which Carlucci had been forced to leave Zanzibar where he served as head of the American diplomatic mission. Their headline read: "Munitions was the word Frank Carlucci used when he was thrown out of Zanzibar."

It was indeed true, for it seems that at some particularly tense point in a Zambian governmental upheaval, Carlucci got on the telephone to Washington and said over an open line that he wanted more "ammunition" in the form of policy decisions and instructions to deal with the situation. The gleeful Zanzibarians listening in on the conversation declared him persona non grata and tossed him out. Try to explain this to the Portuguese press these days and have it understood.

Carlucci, as can be surmised, is a combative personality and not exactly a low-profile diplomat. Having served in such exotic trouble spots as Zanzibar, Kinshasa and Brazil, and having been sent to Lisbon because Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger did not think the embassy here was being tough enough about the local Communist problems, it really is

not very surprising that he has gotten stuck with the CIA label.

Whether an open press conference, exposing himself to some impossible questions ("can you produce documents to prove you were not involved in the March coup?") was the best way to deal with the situation, most of Carlucci's diplomatic colleagues in Lisbon would doubt. But at least he is on the record as having denied any CIA connection.

"It is inconceivable that someone from the CIA could occupy the foreign and domestic posts that I have, which need careful clearance by the United States Senate," Carlucci said. "I have not nor ever have been a CIA member, and the United States had no part whatsoever in the events of March 11 (the attempted counter-coup in Portugal which failed)."

Before the press conference, Carlucci had given several on-the-record interviews to American journalists on the subject of his alleged CIA involvement and sent a formal protest to the Portuguese Foreign Ministry about an article on the subject which appeared in the Lisbon newspaper *Capital*. At the same time he wrote to the Ministry of Information to complain about a "well-oiled, well-directed smear campaign" against him. The result was the invitation from Information Minister Jorge Jesusino to come to the ministry in person—which Carlucci promptly accepted.

Whether his efforts have been effective or counterproductive, whether it will now die away or whether there is enough inuendo from the press conference to keep things going, remains to be seen. The fact that the deputy director of the CIA, Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, made a visit to Portugal last August at a particularly difficult period in the short-lived era of Gen. Antonio de Spínola's presidency is not much help to Carlucci and the American Embassy today.